



Directorate of  
Intelligence

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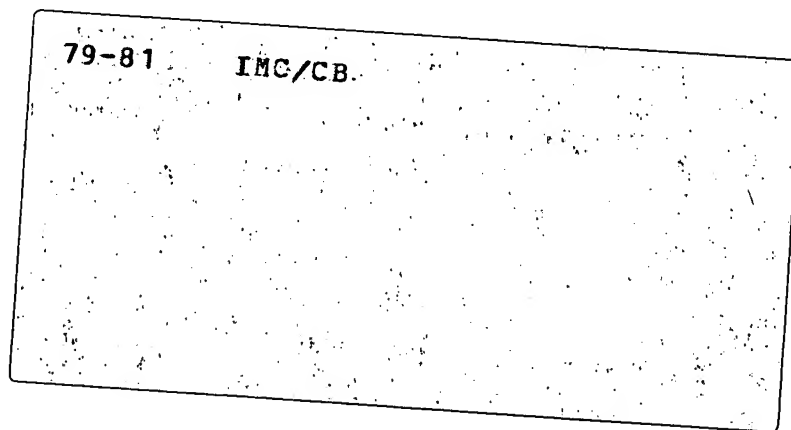
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## Afghanistan Situation Report

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9 July 1985



State Dept. review completed

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Insurgents recently rocketed Kabul and are  
disrupting regime activity in Herat. [ ]

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Iran is again forcing delays of supply caravans  
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The Pashtun cultural heritage spurs determined  
resistance to the Soviet invaders but, at the same  
time, hampers cooperative military efforts. [ ]

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Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis and the  
Office of Soviet Analysis. Questions or comments  
on the issues raised in the publication should be  
directed to [ ]

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**TOP SECRET****INSURGENTS INCREASE PRESSURE IN KABUL AND HERAT**

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The US Embassy reports that insurgents on 2 July rocketed several areas of Kabul while attacking the airport with machinegun fire and rockets or mortars. In mid-May, according to US Embassy sources, security in Herat was so poor that the provincial governor moved about in an APC with an armed escort. The 12-kilometer trip from the airport to the city required 90 minutes and involved passing through successive Soviet, regime, and insurgent checkpoints.

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**Comment:** The insurgent attacks on Kabul are the largest since the Soviets increased security in the area last November and coincide with reports that insurgents in the Kabul area are receiving more and better arms. Security in Herat has been deteriorating for months. The attacks will force the Soviets to move units again through the outlying areas of both cities in search of insurgent bands.

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**IRAN IMPEDES SUPPLY FLOWS**



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Iran is again impeding the flow of materiel to insurgents in western Afghanistan.

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The guerrillas have waited six to nine months before obtaining permission to ship weapons and ammunition from the triborder area in southwestern Afghanistan north to Herat. Some Hizbi Islami insurgents informed the Iranians that they would prefer the danger of transporting supplies across the western plains of Afghanistan to dealing with Iranian officials.

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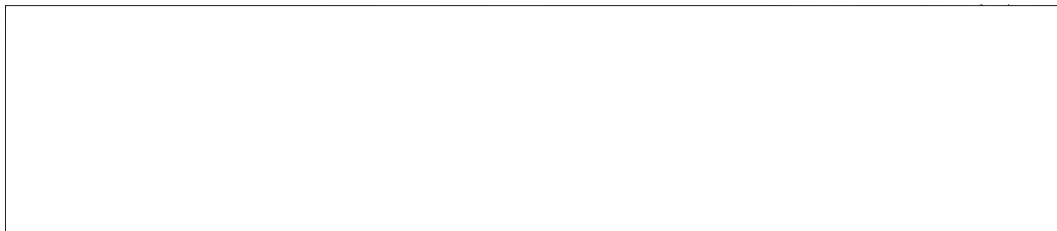
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**Comment:** Tehran's continuing reluctance to assist the mostly Sunni insurgents in western Afghanistan, even by allowing supply caravans to transit Iranian territory, will oblige the resistance to rely more heavily on captured arms and may cause it to postpone or cancel some operations while awaiting supplies. Shortages of arms during major Soviet operations--last summer, for example--reduced the insurgents' fighting capability.

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**IN BRIEF**



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-- A New York Times journalist who recently travelled extensively in Afghanistan says that the resistance controls about 95 percent of the countryside and that he saw no signs of famine or large-scale attacks on civilians. The correspondent is preparing a series of articles on his travels.

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**PERSPECTIVE**

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**THE PASHTUN ETHOS AND THE AFGHAN RESISTANCE**  
by **NESA**

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Pashtun insurgent groups are central to the Afghan insurgency. Pashtuns lead most of the major resistance organizations based in Peshawar, and the groups affiliated with them dominate the insurgency in the southern and eastern provinces. The exiles range politically from the monarchists linked with Gailani to the extreme Islamic fundamentalists led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Sayyaf. In the northern provinces, the Pashtun insurgents have often been at odds with the Tajik-dominated Jamiat-i-Islami. In Qandahar Province, Pashtun insurgents from different tribes have frequently fought each other. Despite their role in internecine fighting in the insurgency, the Pashtuns have been militarily among the most effective groups fighting the Soviets. Their most noted commander is Abdul Haq, who has been responsible for many of the attacks on the Kabul area.

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In our view, cultural factors account for the Pashtuns' determined resistance to the Soviet invaders and the Kabul regime and at the same time for the tribesmen's difficulties in mounting a coherent military effort. The Pashtun ethos has been a major factor in the insurgents' internecine fighting and rivalry. Pashtuns are aggressive, fractious, and martial. They are linked mainly by a common language (Pashtu) and a code of conduct (Pashtunwali) based on Islam and tradition, in which vengeance is a key element. Though Pashtuns comprise much of the insurgency, they also dominate the military officer ranks of the Kabul regime. Urban Pashtuns, including many military officers and several members of the Kabul leadership, often have lost their tribal identities.

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**The Pashtun People**

The Pashtuns are the largest and the politically dominant ethnic group in Afghanistan. According to academic experts, an estimated 6 million Pashtuns live in Afghanistan, with the majority in the southern, eastern, and northeastern parts of the country. Most are engaged in farming and livestock raising; others

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are merchants, artisans, soldiers, and civil servants; about a third are normally pastoral nomads, though the war has severely disrupted their migratory habits and turned many into sedentary refugees. Nearly all are Sunni. The more than 20 Pashtun tribes are divided into more than 400 clans; most tribes are grouped into the Durani and Ghilzai tribal confederations, which rose in opposition to each other in the 18th century.

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### Leadership and Hierarchy

Pashtun insurgent leaders are chosen for several reasons, including their military effectiveness. According to Western and Afghan academicians, a Pashtun leader is selected on the basis of his ability to protect his tribe from external threats and to solve internal tribal problems. Leadership qualities include bravery, wisdom, charisma, wealth, fighting ability, and hospitality--a willingness to receive, feed, and support others. To have a significant contingent of fighters, a tribal leader must come from a fairly large clan, according to an Afghan academician. Leaders are not normally elected by formal ceremony or vote, according to an academic expert, but emerge by demonstrating ability and are accepted by consensus. Once a person is regarded as a leader, a family member--usually a son or brother--customarily replaces him when he dies or grows too old to lead. Although the tribes have a hierarchy, the Pashtuns value individual freedom, equality, and respect for the dignity of the individual, according to Western observers.

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### Pashtunwali

The Pashtun code, Pashtunwali, is responsible for many of the divisions in Pashtun society and the insurgency. Accenting militarism and honor, the code has as its most important elements **badal**, vengeance; **melmastia**, the obligation of hospitality and the protection given each guest; and **nanavati**, the right of asylum and the obligation to accept a truce offer. The principles of honor and revenge have made feuds continuous processes in the Pashtun community. To infringe on someone's honor is cause for killing the transgressor, which in turn will call for another death

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[REDACTED]

in revenge; blood money is sometimes accepted. Families are obliged to seek vengeance, even after a generation or more, and **badal** has led to feuds lasting several generations. **Melmastia** is a matter of prestige and a duty of the individual household. Hospitality must be extended to known enemies as lavishly as to friends or strangers. In turn the guest is expected to behave in a friendly manner. **Nanavati** is a special form of hospitality illustrated by a Pashtun folk story that praises a woman who granted sanctuary to her son's murderer. [REDACTED]

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**Loyalties.** A Pashtun's commitment to persons and groups outside the family and clan is uncertain and impermanent. According to Western observers, a Pashtun's first loyalty is to his kin group, which is the source of his livelihood, his social neighborhood, and his moral code. His loyalty extends to his tribe and nation only insofar as his family interests coincide with the larger groups'. The importance of an issue is often measured by how much it involves his family honor or welfare. [REDACTED] Pashtun tribesmen have frequently agreed to truces with the Kabul regime and have also agreed to serve as regime militia. [REDACTED] in many instances the tribesmen have accepted the government's offers of money and weapons and soon after redefected to the resistance. Sometimes the tribesmen have agreed to negotiate and then ambushed the regime's negotiators. Such behavior is permitted by the tribal codes, according to a Western academic expert, because the regime is not considered a legitimate authority.

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[REDACTED]

**Militancy.** Tradition also encourages Pashtuns to participate in the insurgency. Pashtuns, according to Western observers, admire the posturing warrior, with bandolier and rifle, who stands erect and moves lithely. Readiness to do battle is suggested not only by the custom of carrying weapons but also by village construction--the high defense towers of the fortified village are common throughout Afghanistan, but

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particularly in Pashtun territory. The heroic spirit, according to one Western observer, has prompted Pashtun insurgents to carry tape recorders to ambushes and fire fights. The recorded sounds of battle accompanied by the shouting of fierce insults and slogans are taken back to camp and played to admiring women and children. Reliable observers also indicate that Pashtuns prefer individual weapons to crew-served weapons because the former permit personal identification and greater ego gratification. [REDACTED]

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**Rivalry.** The Pashtun custom of cousin marriage--a man weds the daughter of his father's brother--perpetuates the inward-looking nature of the society, according to Western observers, and often causes male cousins to become rivals, vying for inheritance from the common grandfather, for wives, and for influence within the family. Cousin rivalry has caused many Pashtun family feuds and is an important factor in tribal politics. If there are two factions within a tribe, cousins will usually be in opposite camps. Fundamentalist resistance leader Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, for example, is a first cousin of former President Hafizullah Amin, according to a Western academician. [REDACTED]

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### Pushtunistan

The concept of a united Pushtunistan has been a periodic battle cry of the Pashtuns. Advocates seek self-determination for the Pashtuns--that is, for those in Pakistan--and some want relocation of the border eastward to the Indus escarpment. The irredentist approach of successive Afghan governments has had diminishing appeal for Pashtun tribal leaders in Pakistan, however, who seem to prefer greater local autonomy within Pakistan to political union with their Afghan brothers. [REDACTED]

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### Conclusion

The lack of a united front on Pushtunistan as well as other subjects underscores the individualistic nature of the Pashtuns. Of all the ethnic groups in Afghanistan, the Pashtun insurgents are the least likely to cooperate among themselves, let alone with others, but the most likely to fight indefinitely. [REDACTED]

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